

Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (NVLTCOP)



Office of the State
Long-Term Care
Ombudsman

Promoting Quality - Protecting Rights

*Serving the Jurisdictions of Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun,
through their Area Agencies on Aging*



THE UPDATE

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Older Americans Month occurs each May throughout the nation. This proud tradition began under President John F. Kennedy who designated May as "Senior Citizens Month" in 1963. It was later renamed Older Americans Month under President Jimmy Carter in 1980. This celebration recognizes older Americans for their contributions and demonstrates our nation's commitment to helping them stay healthy and active.

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Each year, the president issues a proclamation during or before the month of May asking the nation to pay tribute and celebrate the older adults in our communities. The Administration for Community Living, an organization of the Health and Human Services Department, has announced the theme for Older Americans Month 2014. This year's theme for Older Americans Month is "Safe Today. Healthy Tomorrow." The theme focuses on injury prevention and safety to encourage older adults to protect themselves and remain active and independent for as long as possible.

Unintentional injuries to this population result in at least 6 million medically treated injuries and more than 30,000 deaths every year. With an emphasis on safety during Older Americans Month, older adults are encouraged to learn about the variety of ways they can avoid the leading causes of injury, like falls. By taking control of their safety, older Americans can live longer, healthier lives.

For more information on how to celebrate this important month, check the Administration for Community Living's website at www.acl.gov.



National Healthcare Decisions Day

The **7th Annual National Healthcare Decisions Day** will be held on April 16, 2014. This nationwide initiative was established by Nathan A. Kottkamp to educate adults of all ages about the importance of advance health care planning and to encourage health care providers to discuss this topic with their patients. Providers, facilities and caregivers generally benefit when patients have health care directives and documents that appoint health care decision makers. Providers, facilities and caregivers can

encourage their patients and remind them of the importance of these decisions, discussions and documents.

According to Kottkamp, it is important to plan ahead of a health crisis and to put advanced health decisions in writing. Doing this helps guide family members to make important health decisions for their loved ones.

Virginia residents should consider taking advantage of securely storing their Advance Health Care Directives in the state's free online registry. This tool can be used to store important documents that protect a person's legal rights and ensure that their medical wishes are honored in the event that they become incapacitated and are unable to manage their own care.

This secure registry allows storage of Advance Health Care Directives, Health Care Powers of Attorney, Declarations of Anatomical Gift (organ donation), and other documents. This ensures that family members, medical providers, emergency personnel, or other designated persons will be able to access these documents.

This secure registry is located on the Virginia Department of Social Services website. The direct link to the registry can be accessed by going to: www.virginiaregistry.org. This site also links to the Virginia State Bar website, which provides free Advance Directive forms, as well as an Advanced Directive Checklist. The checklist is a good tool for organizing everything that is needed.

As a result of National Healthcare Decisions Day, many more people can be expected to have thoughtful conversations about their healthcare decisions. Going through the process of advance care planning helps people prepare to be their own best advocate regarding healthcare decisions.

For more information about National Healthcare Decision Day, please visit:

www.nationalhealthcaredecisionsday.org



Why Are Family Councils Important?

Family councils in long term care are important because they promote and improve the quality of life for residents. As defined by the ElderCare Rights Alliance, a family council is an independent self-led and self-determined group of families and friends of residents. Many people do not realize that state and federal laws recognize the importance of family councils. As referenced by the ElderCare Rights Alliance, according to the law:

Families and friends have the right to organize, maintain, and participate in family councils; the facility must provide a private meeting space for the council; the family council has the right to make recommendations regarding facility policies; the family council has the right to participate in the annual survey conducted by the Office of Licensure; the nursing home must designate a staff person to assist the council and respond to written requests and the nursing home must try to establish a council, if one does not exist.

People may ask why have a family council at my facility when it is well managed? For starters, a family council can help build positive relationships with staff, which will help ensure the best quality of life for residents. In addition, they provide a safe channel for airing grievances and serve as a source of education, support and creative ideas for improving residents' conditions.

Many facility administrators find family councils help them educate family members on facility procedures, activities, and address concerns as they arise. This can be a great benefit for all involved.

A family council, however, is not the best forum for dealing with more serious issues, such as abuse. Such complaints should be referred to the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, Adult Protective Services, and to licensing authorities.

One of the roles of the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is to promote and support the development of family councils.

The program encourages families to ask if there is an active family council at their loved ones facility. If not, the Ombudsman program can support their efforts in establishing one.

If you wish to have more information about this group or starting a family council please contact the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman office at 703-324-5861, TTY 711.

The following are helpful websites on family councils:

- www.nccnhr.org - Select Consumer Center for family council information;
- www.eldercarerights.org - Select Nursing Home Councils for more info on family councils.

Volunteer Advocates Needed!



The Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is looking for people who are empathetic, diplomatic, assertive and skilled communicators to be Volunteer Ombudsmen.

As an Ombudsman, you will be assigned to visit a local nursing or assisted living facility, working to ensure that the residents' rights are being protected and helping residents with problems that they are unable to resolve alone.

Volunteer Ombudsmen dedicate four hours per week for one year. Visits must occur between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays. On-going training and support is provided.

The next Volunteer Ombudsman training will be in September. The exact dates are to be determined.

For more information, please call 703-324-5861 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/LTCOmbudsman.

National Stroke Awareness Month

May is National Stroke Awareness Month. According to the Administration on Aging, when a person has a stroke, the brain stops getting oxygen and nutrients and brain cells begin to die. The damage that results from a stroke can affect the entire body, causing mild to severe paralysis, problems with thinking or speaking, and emotional difficulties.

Early identification of a stroke and prompt action are key. If you experience any of the following symptoms, call 911 immediately:

- Numbness or weakness in your face, arm, leg, or especially on one side of the body
- Confusion
- Difficulty speaking, or understanding speech
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination
- Severe headaches with no known cause

Although your stroke risk is determined by some factors out of your control, such as your family history, you can help the odds by taking charge of the factors you can control: managing high blood pressure, quitting smoking, and maintaining a healthy weight.

For more information about stroke symptoms and prevention, please visit:

National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke at www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/stroke/stroke_needtoknow.htm



Need Information or Have a Concern About Nursing or Assisted Living Facilities?

Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

12011 Government Center Parkway,
Suite 708

Fairfax, VA 22035

Offices hours are Monday through Friday
from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Intake Line: 703-324-5861 TTY: 711

Fax: 703-324-3575

Email us at:

NVLT COP@FairfaxCounty.Gov

To view information on the NVLT COP website and to see the Investigation and Complaint Log, please go to:

www.FairfaxCounty.Gov/LTCOmbudsman

What an Ombudsman does:

- ♦ **Advocates** for improving the quality of life for persons receiving long-term care services
- ♦ **Resolves complaints** against long-term care providers through **counseling, negotiation, and investigation**
- ♦ **Provides information** about long-term care providers to help make an informed decision
- ♦ **Educates** the community about long-term care issues
- ♦ **Visits** residents of long-term care facilities on a weekly basis through our volunteer program
- ♦ **Trains** long-term care staff on long-term care related information
- ♦ **Consults** with providers

National Volunteer Week

Question: What do a Registered Nurse, Marine Biologist, High School Teacher, Team Leader for the World Bank, Attorney, Homemaker and Computer Systems and Network Administrator have in common?

Answer: These are the backgrounds of some of the individuals who have volunteered with the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program over the past year!

April 6-12 is National Volunteer Week. This week is about recognizing and encouraging those people who give their time to help others. We would like to take the time to thank our Volunteer Ombudsmen for their vital contributions!

Each Volunteer Ombudsman has made a commitment to spend 4 hours a week visiting a specific facility, acting as an observer, negotiator, sounding board and advocate for the residents. A number of volunteers have had a friend or relative in a facility or have spent time there themselves, so they bring first-hand knowledge and, certainly, their many different perspectives. In 2013, our 58 Volunteer Ombudsmen visited facilities 3,757 times and spent 8,424 hours working with and advocating for residents and families. They are truly an amazing group of people!

Our staff and policy board are grateful to the superb group of volunteers who work tirelessly to support the rights and dignity of each resident in long-term care facilities in Northern Virginia. The Volunteer Ombudsmen are a vital component of our program. Without their dedication and commitment, we would not be the program that we are today. Many thanks go out to our wonderful volunteers!





The Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in all programs and services. To request reasonable accommodations or alternate formats, call 703-324-5861 (voice); 711 (TTY).

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